

New York Daily News - <http://www.nydailynews.com>**9/11 cash for *what*?**

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Wednesday, July 26th, 2006

The city is using a big slice of the \$1 billion it got from the feds post-9/11 to fight first responders who claim they got sick on the site, a lawyer who is suing the city charged yesterday.

David Worby, who is waging a suit on behalf of 8,000 WTC responders and their survivors, said \$20 million has been "spent on city lawyers to deny the claims of cops, firefighters and others who were sickened."

"That money should be used to help these people," he said. "Take \$100 million from the billion, Mr. Mayor, and set up a proper registry" to monitor the health of those who toiled at Ground Zero.

There was no immediate response to Worby's accusation from Mayor Bloomberg, but the city contends it is allowed to tap funds from the World Trade Center Captive Insurance Company to defend itself against claims. The federally funded entity was set up after the 9/11 attacks because no commercial insurance company would take on the risk.

Bloomberg promised to look into whether the city stiffed its 9/11 heroes after being prodded to do so by hard-hitting Daily News editorials that described the plight of 12,000 ailing Ground Zero workers.

So far, he hasn't acknowledged that the deaths of at least four first responders - and the illnesses of thousands more - were directly related to their toiling amid the toxins of Ground Zero.

Yesterday, Gov. Pataki also vowed to do right by the ailing workers.

"I believe that the reporting by the Daily News is important," he said. "I have directed all relevant state agencies to follow up on these reports and ensure that critical treatment and compensation for injuries suffered as a result of their involvement in the rescue, recovery and cleanup efforts is accessible to each and every one of our heroes."

Worby wasn't the only City Hall critic yesterday who accused Bloomberg of pinching pennies while Ground Zero heroes are suffering.

Peter Meringolo, president of the Correction Captains' Association and chairman of the state Public Employee Conference, said the city is sitting on a \$5 billion surplus and some of that dough should be used to help 9/11's forgotten victims.

"I really don't want to hear it's not in the city budget because that's nonsense," Meringolo said. "The mayor talks about productivity. If risking your life after 9/11 isn't productivity, I don't know what is."

"Currently there are also over 100 firefighters that FDNY doctors have deemed as too permanently disabled to continue working as firefighters, yet the city won't allow them to retire," added Steve Cassidy, head of the Uniformed Firefighters Association. "If we are not going to take care of the rescuers, what type of message does that send?"

With Lisa L. Colangelo